Cross-Cultural Education Model Through Multicultural Classrooms : An Ethnographic Study in Secondary Schools

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the implementation of cross-cultural reflection within the context of multicultural education, focusing on understanding the dynamics of cultural diversity in the classroom. This research uses an ethnographic method with a qualitative approach. The research data were obtained through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis in several multicultural schools in Indonesia. Data analysis Involves identifying recurring themes, patterns, and ideas within the data, process of comparing data segments to identify similarities and differences, focuses on the stories and experiences shared by participants. The findings indicate that cross-cultural education plays an important role in improving intercultural understanding, motivating students, and creating a more inclusive learning environment. The integration of local culture into learning through the use of folklore and traditional practices has proven effective in increasing student engagement. In addition, the results of the study reveal the need for further training for teachers in adopting an ethnopedagogical approach to overcome learning barriers due to cultural differences.

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Introduction

Multicultural education aims to deepen the understanding of cultural diversity (Banks & A, 2019), while instilling values of tolerance, equality, and social justice among students (Sari & Indartono, 2019). Within this framework, cross-cultural education reflection serves as a strategic tool that allows both teachers and students to identify and understand the complexities of cross-cultural interactions in the classroom. This reflection aims not only to raise awareness of differences but also to help educators and learners evaluate how cultural diversity affects the teaching-learning process, communication patterns, and the development of attitudes and behaviors toward students from various backgrounds.

Multicultural challenges are not only an issue for countries with high migration rates but also an important concern in countries rich in ethnic and cultural diversity, such as Indonesia (Triandafyllidou, 2011). In this context, cross-cultural and multicultural education has become increasingly relevant as a response to the needs of pluralistic societies. (Portera, 2010) highlights that discussions on multicultural education have evolved into a global issue, particularly in countries with significant cultural diversity, including Indonesia.

Multicultural education is a broad educational strategy that incorporates elements of cross-cultural understanding and promotes equality, justice, and the celebration of diversity (Gosh & Galczynski, 2014; Banks & A, 2019; Chen, 2024). Its goal is to empower all students, regardless of their backgrounds, to succeed academically while respecting their

cultural identities (Wiggan & Watson-Vandiver, 2019). In Indonesian classrooms, multicultural education focuses on integrating various cultural perspectives into the curriculum (Raihani, 2018) enabling students from diverse backgrounds to see themselves reflected in content and teaching. In line with this, several studies have been conducted to understand how cross-cultural reflection can be incorporated into curricula and teaching strategies in schools (Kang, 2021). These studies aim to present an educational approach that not only acknowledges cultural differences but also leverages them as strengths to create an inclusive learning environment (Genç, M. Fatih, Ina Ter Avest, 2011). Thus, cross-cultural reflection becomes a foundation for developing educational practices that can address diversity challenges, overcome cross-cultural communication barriers, and promote social harmony amidst ethnic and cultural diversity.

This study aims to analyze the implementation of cross-cultural reflection within the context of multicultural education, focusing on understanding the dynamics of cultural diversity in the classroom. Using an ethnographic approach, this study will explore educational practices in multicultural classrooms while examining how cross-cultural reflection can support the development of more inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogical approaches. The findings of this research are expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of cross-cultural reflection in enhancing the quality of multicultural education, particularly in Indonesia.

Research Method

This research uses an ethnographic method with a qualitative approach was chosen in this study because it provides the researcher with an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the practices, values, and social interactions occurring in a multicultural educational environment (Green & Bloome, 2004). This method allows for a holistic understanding of the learning situation (Whitehead, 2005) through direct observation of classroom activities, interviews with teachers and students, and participation in daily school activities (Milligan, 2016). This approach offers detailed insights into cross-cultural dynamics, which are often implicit but have a significant impact on the learning process (Students, 2012).

Multicultural classrooms in Indonesia serve as spaces where different cultures, languages, and values meet and interact (Jayadi et al., 2022). By using ethnography, the researcher can directly document these cross-cultural interactions, providing a clearer understanding of how students and teachers from diverse backgrounds interact, learn together, and respond to each other in the context of learning (Saravia-Shore & Arvizu, 2017). This approach is crucial for exploring the social and cultural dimensions that shape the learning experience in multicultural classrooms. The participant in this study are students from multicultural classrooms in vocational schools in West Java by purposive sampling (see Table 1).

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Etnis	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Female	Male	Religion
Sunda	15	5	11	4	Islam
Jawa	5		3	2	Islam
Dayak	4		2	2	Protestan
Papua	8		6	2	Protestan
N	32		22	10	

60

The researcher focuses on students and teachers in the multicultural classroom program at vocational high schools in West Java, Indonesia, using a qualitative method to explore the phenomenon. To ensure accuracy and relevance, it is crucial to evaluate the data collection tools to capture the nuances of cross-cultural education, ensuring that the tools effectively gather insights that align with the principles of multicultural education. Addressing these aspects will enhance the understanding of the phenomenon through a critical examination of language, observations, and literature. Each interview lasts for 60 minutes, resulting in more than 240 minutes of audio data.

Data analysis in ethnographic studies involves systematic and interpretive processes to derive meaningful insights from qualitative data: Involves identifying recurring themes, patterns, and ideas within the data; Systematically categorizing textual data to interpret and quantify patterns; Focuses on the stories and experiences shared by participants.

The initial stage in ethnographic data analysis is the coding process, which involves identifying and grouping the key themes that emerge from the research data (Saravia-Shore & Arvizu, 2017). This coding aims to organize raw data into meaningful categories, making further analysis easier. Once the data is coded, the researcher begins to identify key themes or recurring patterns that reflect important aspects of cross-cultural education. These themes not only help uncover significant dimensions but also provide an initial view of the relationships between variables in the context of multicultural learning.

In ethnographic analysis, particular attention is given to the social and cultural context in which the data is collected (Hunter, 2012). Therefore, after identifying the themes, the next step is to explore the context in which these themes emerge. This context includes social, cultural, and environmental factors that influence how cross-cultural interactions occur in the classroom. This approach allows the researcher to understand how these dynamics relate to educational practices and how the socio-cultural context affects students' learning experiences.

Results and Discussion

After the main themes are analyzed in their social context, the researcher focuses on deep interpretation to reveal the broader and more complex meanings of the collected data. This analysis involves uncovering hidden elements that may not be immediately visible, such as cultural values, social norms, and power dynamics in the multicultural classroom. This approach helps generate a more holistic insight into the phenomenon being studied. (see table 2)

Table 2. Cross-cultural practice indicators

Indicator	Description
Student Cultural Background	Teachers strive to understand their students' cultural backgrounds, values, and traditions. This understanding helps them adjust their teaching methods to make learning more relevant and accessible.
Cultural References	Educators incorporate cultural elements from students' lives into the curriculum and classroom activities. For example, they can include stories, examples, and case studies from different cultures to make the content accessible to all students.
Differentiating Instruction	Teachers modify their teaching styles and

strategies to accommodate the diverse learning preferences and needs that may be influenced by students' cultural contexts. This may include visual aids, group work, or experiential learning that reflects diverse learning styles.

Through this structured analysis process, ethnographic research offers a profound understanding of cross-cultural interactions in the educational context(Çağlayan & Başal, 2023). The findings can explain how cross-cultural education contributes to more inclusive, responsive, and meaningful learning, while helping create a classroom environment that effectively bridges the cultural diversity of students. This analysis also contributes significantly to designing teaching strategies that support the integration of multicultural values into the learning process (Nursyamsiah et al., 2023).

Curriculum Design

The curriculum is designed to include content and topics that represent the history, contributions, and perspectives of various cultural groups (Mpuangnan & Ntombela, 2024). his approach goes beyond focusing on the dominant culture by recognizing the experiences of minority and marginalized groups. Teachers incorporate discussions on issues such as social justice, equality, and intercultural power dynamics (Cho, 2018). They also encourage students to think critically about issues like racism, sexism, and discrimination, fostering empathy and awareness among students.

Learning projects are designed to engage students in exploring and presenting their own cultural heritage or learning about other cultures. These activities aim to help students appreciate their own identity while recognizing and respecting the diversity around them.

Group Work and Cross-Cultural Interaction

Teachers organize group work that brings together students from different cultural backgrounds to collaborate (Maulani & Faqih, 2021). This strategy creates opportunities for cross-cultural interaction, building teamwork skills, and developing intercultural communication abilities. Additionally, teachers create a classroom environment that respects all cultures, where students feel safe expressing their identities. These efforts include a firm approach to addressing discrimination or bias while fostering a respectful and inclusive atmosphere.

Teacher Professional Development

From the educator's perspective, teachers actively engage in continuous professional training to enhance their ability to understand and respond to cultural diversity in the classroom (Muna et al., 2023). These training programs often cover topics such as recognizing implicit bias, applying culturally relevant teaching strategies, and supporting students from diverse backgrounds. Teachers are also encouraged to reflect on their own cultural assumptions, which may influence their teaching methods. This reflection helps them adopt more inclusive, respectful, and appreciative approaches to students' diversity (Grządziel, 2024).

Based on this explanation, at least three influencing indicator points are identified:

1) Student Cultural Background
   Teachers strive to recognize and understand the cultures, values, and traditions of their students. This understanding enables them to adjust their teaching approach, making the material more relevant and easier for students to grasp.
2) Cultural Integration

Educators incorporate elements of students' cultures into the curriculum and classroom learning activities. For example, they may use stories, illustrations, or case studies from various cultures to ensure that the learning content is accessible to all students.

3) Differentiated Approach

Teachers adjust their teaching methods and strategies to meet the diverse learning needs and preferences of students influenced by their cultural backgrounds. This may involve using visual aids, group learning, or experiential methods that reflect the diversity of students' learning styles.

The Role of Teachers in Creating an Inclusive and Respectful Environment

In teaching practices, teachers often organize students to work in diverse groups, ensuring that those from different cultural backgrounds collaborate. This approach not only encourages social interaction but also helps break down cultural barriers, enabling students to learn from different perspectives. One effective way to foster such interaction is through group projects focused on cultural exploration, where students are tasked with researching and presenting on specific cultural topics. These activities not only deepen students' understanding of other cultures but also provide valuable insights into the diverse backgrounds and experiences of individuals in the classroom.

However, in a multicultural environment, cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings or even biases (Sarangi, 2022). eachers play a crucial role in addressing these situations by facilitating open discussions and teaching effective conflict resolution skills. They ensure that every student feels safe and valued in the classroom and are prepared to act promptly in response to any discriminatory or prejudiced behavior. Additionally, many schools implement programs aimed at fostering student empathy, focusing on diversity, inclusion, and emotional intelligencel (Sokal & Katz, 2017). These initiatives help students better understand the feelings and perspectives of their peers, especially those from different cultural backgrounds.

Teachers also serve as role models in establishing an inclusive and respectful environment. They lead by example, demonstrating respect, support for diversity, and promoting healthy intercultural interactions (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016). Through culturally sensitive curriculum design, thoughtful classroom management, and open interpersonal relationships, teachers create a classroom atmosphere where every student feels valued, included, and respected (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In doing so, they not only help students achieve academic success but also nurture them to become compassionate and culturally aware individuals ready to thrive in an increasingly diverse society.

Teachers play a pivotal role in creating inclusive and respectful classrooms, particularly in settings with diverse cultural backgrounds (Guberina, 2023). Their influence extends beyond teaching academic content to shaping the social and emotional climate of the class. By setting an example, teachers show respect and understanding toward all students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. When teachers use inclusive language and treat each student with respect, they establish standards for students on how they should interact with one another (Wet, 2015).

Teachers who actively listen to students and show empathy toward their experiences can foster a supportive classroom atmosphere where students feel valued and understood. This, in turn, encourages students to respect and listen to each other. Moreover, teachers establish classroom norms emphasizing the importance of respecting all viewpoints, backgrounds, and identities. They communicate clearly that bullying, discrimination, or other

exclusionary behaviors will not be tolerated. Teachers also encourage students to share their cultural experiences and perspectives, creating an open dialogue that allows students to learn from one another and build relationships based on mutual respect and understanding.

Reflection on cross-cultural education practices in multicultural classrooms in Indonesia highlights the importance of this approach in creating an inclusive learning environment that supports the success of students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Wahyudin & Suwirta, 2017). By integrating local cultural elements into learning, teachers can address the challenges students may face while simultaneously strengthening their cultural identity. However, effective implementation of cross-cultural education requires greater support, including teacher training, the development of a more flexible curriculum, and the provision of relevant resources. Successful implementation of cross-cultural education in multicultural classrooms will enhance the quality of education in Indonesia and prepare students to become more tolerant, open-minded individuals who appreciate diversity in an increasingly global and diverse society.

Activities to Enhance Cultural Awareness

Teachers organize various activities to foster awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity. For instance, students may participate in cultural presentations, storytelling sessions, or projects where they share elements of their own cultures, such as traditional foods, customs, clothing, or language (Al Farisi et al., 2024).

Teachers design and implement various activities aimed at fostering cultural awareness and appreciation among students, making diversity a central part of the learning experience. For example, cultural presentations can involve students showcasing artifacts, rituals, or significant historical events tied to their cultural heritage. These activities allow students to not only share their traditions but also reflect on their identity and its relevance in a diverse environment.

Storytelling sessions are another impactful method, where students narrate traditional tales or personal anecdotes that highlight unique cultural values or experiences. Such sessions not only improve communication skills but also help students recognize universal themes across cultures, promoting empathy and understanding.

Additionally, project-based activities such as creating displays or multimedia presentations about their own or another culture can deepen engagement. These projects often include elements like preparing traditional foods, explaining the symbolism behind cultural attire, or even teaching a few phrases in their native language. By involving tangible and interactive elements, these activities create a multisensory learning experience, fostering respect and curiosity about different ways of life. Ultimately, these activities provide students with a platform to celebrate their cultural uniqueness while learning to appreciate the richness of diversity in their classroom and beyond.

Classroom Cultural Discussions

Discussions about cultural differences and similarities are a cornerstone of fostering mutual understanding in a multicultural classroom. Teachers encourage these dialogues as a way for students to explore the values, norms, and traditions that shape their identities and perspectives (Nursyamsiah et al., 2023). By creating a safe and respectful environment for open conversation, students can engage in meaningful exchanges about their cultural backgrounds.

For example, teachers might introduce topics such as family traditions, festivals, or societal roles, encouraging students to share personal experiences or compare practices across cultures (Erawati, 2017). Through guided discussions, students can uncover surprising

similarities, such as shared values of respect for elders or the importance of community, while also appreciating the uniqueness of each culture.

These discussions also serve as an opportunity to address cultural biases or misconceptions. Teachers play a critical role in facilitating this process by asking reflective questions, such as, "How might someone from a different culture view this tradition?" or "What assumptions do we hold about others, and how can we challenge them?" This approach encourages students to critically examine their perspectives and develop empathy.

Role-playing or scenario-based activities can further enhance these discussions. For instance, students might analyze cultural misunderstandings in hypothetical situations and collaborate on solutions. Such exercises promote critical thinking and highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity in communication. By integrating these dialogues into the classroom routine, teachers help students develop a deeper awareness of the diversity around them. This not only broadens their worldview but also equips them with the social and emotional skills necessary to interact effectively and respectfully in a multicultural society.

Differentiated Instruction

Teachers implement differentiated teaching methods to address the diverse learning needs and cultural backgrounds of students, creating a more inclusive and effective educational environment. By tailoring learning materials and instructional strategies, educators ensure that students from varying cultural and linguistic contexts can engage meaningfully with the curriculum.

For example, teachers might adapt lesson content to reflect the cultural experiences and knowledge of their students (Maulani et al., 2022). In a history class, they could include historical events or figures from different cultures represented in the classroom. This approach not only makes the material more relatable but also validates the students' cultural identities, fostering a sense of belonging.

In terms of language, teachers may use visuals, bilingual resources, or simplified text for students with limited proficiency in the classroom's primary language. For instance, a science lesson might include diagrams or multimedia resources to convey complex concepts visually, ensuring comprehension without reliance on advanced linguistic skills.

Differentiated strategies also extend to teaching methods. For students who learn better through collaboration, teachers might design group projects that draw on diverse cultural perspectives. For those who excel in hands-on learning, activities like role-playing, creating models, or conducting experiments can provide an interactive and culturally enriched experience. Moreover, teachers use varied assessment methods to respect students' diverse abilities and preferences. Rather than relying solely on traditional exams, they might allow students to present their understanding through art, storytelling, or digital projects. These alternative assessments acknowledge different cultural expressions of knowledge and intelligence.

Teachers also strive to create an inclusive classroom environment by recognizing and addressing potential cultural misunderstandings or biases. They actively promote mutual respect and encourage students to share their perspectives, allowing the entire class to benefit from the richness of cultural diversity. By implementing these tailored teaching methods, educators empower all students to succeed academically and socially while promoting an appreciation for cultural diversity. This approach helps to bridge gaps in understanding and creates a learning space where every student feels valued and supported.

The study provides insights into how cultural diversity shapes classroom interactions and learning processes. Conceptually supports the idea that cross-cultural education not only

equips students with academic knowledge but also fosters self-identity and cultural pride. By addressing the conceptual and practical dimensions, this study serves as a guide for educators, policymakers, and researchers aiming to build more equitable and inclusive educational environments.

Conclusion

The conclusions obtained from the findings of this study cross-cultural education implemented in multicultural classrooms in Indonesia not only fosters appreciation for cultural diversity but also creates an inclusive learning environment that supports students' intellectual and social development. Through culturally sensitive approaches, teaching becomes more meaningful and effective, contributing significantly to the development of a more tolerant and harmonious society. Despite its many benefits, this study also highlights challenges in implementing multicultural classrooms, such as the lack of teacher training on cross-cultural education and varying levels of student comprehension of the material presented. Curriculum flexibility and support from schools and the government are essential to address these obstacles.

Recommendation

This recommendation for policy makers: Continuous professional development should be provided for teachers to enhance their cultural awareness and competence. Training programs focusing on recognizing implicit biases, understanding cultural differences, and adopting culturally responsive teaching strategies will equip teachers to better serve students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Teachers should also be trained in conflict resolution and effective communication strategies to manage potential misunderstandings that arise in a multicultural classroom.

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